

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DARRELL M. TRENT, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF
TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL
SERVICE, CONCERNING H.R. 5038. DECEMBER 2, 1981.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to testify in support of H.R. 5038, a bill proposed by the Department of Transportation to provide increased premium pay for key FAA operational employees and to assist us in our efforts to rebuild the air traffic system. Secretary Lewis has asked me to express both his appreciation to the Committee for holding these hearings and his regrets that a long-standing commitment to be out of the country has precluded him from being able to appear today.

Enactment of the legislation before you will fulfill a commitment that this Administration made to the working controllers who honored their oaths of office and have kept our air traffic control system operating both safely and efficiently.

The safety mission of these FAA employees is integral to our air transportation system, and this legislation can contribute to the United States' unmatched air safety record. As you know, in June we signed a tentative agreement with PATCO in which we agreed to support legislation to be submitted to Congress that would have provided an average pay increase of 6.6% to our controller workforce. That tentative agreement was ultimately rejected by PATCO and an illegal strike initiated on August 3. In the early days of that strike, we told our working controllers that we would propose legislation for those who stayed on the job. Consequently, the legislation before you will provide the same average pay increase

of 6.6% to these controllers that was called for in the tentative agreement signed earlier.

Since FAA Administrator Helms will outline for you in a moment the details of our proposed legislation, I won't go into the various features of that legislation. But there are two key issues that arose in the House floor debate on this legislation to which I would like to respond for the Committee. The first deals with the timing of our submission of the legislative package to the Congress, and the second with its cost.

One criticism which arose during the House debate was that DOT had waited until early November to submit its legislation to the Congress, yet, at the same time, was arguing for its early enactment. Let me respond, first, by saying that we do believe the legislation merits prompt enactment by the Congress.

Following the controllers' strike, many people have been called upon to put forth extraordinary efforts to keep our country's air traffic moving safely and efficiently. The amount of traffic moved safely during that time shows clearly that these people have performed their jobs in the best traditions of public service. We believe these efforts merit recognition now, not at some time in the future. Having expressed our strongly held belief that the legislation should be enacted at the earliest time, it's understandable that some Members of the Committee would ask us to explain our decision to defer submission of that legislation to the Congress until the beginning of November. The answer is simple. Since we had been negotiating with PATCO over the content of legislation

we would recommend to the Congress, we concluded that, despite our interest in promptly demonstrating to the controllers who stayed with us that they would be treated fairly, it would not be appropriate to propose legislation affecting air controller pay until a decision was handed down by the Federal Labor Relations Authority on the question of PATCO's status. In late October, FLRA decided to decertify PATCO. The legislative proposal was forwarded to the Congress promptly thereafter.

I would like to clarify now concerns expressed over the cost of this package. We project that the cost of this legislation will be \$57.4 million in fiscal year 1982. The tentative contract which we entered into with PATCO was projected to cost \$40 million for controllers and \$4 million for supervisors, a total of \$44 million. Apparently the difference between those two figures, particularly since we have fewer controllers now, has led some people to believe that our package must be providing controllers with a pay raise in excess of the 6.6% we originally agreed to support before the Congress. That is not the case. Where \$40 million was estimated for all the controllers in the PATCO bargaining unit, a total of \$21 million is currently estimated for about 9,100 controllers. At the time we negotiated the tentative contract with PATCO, we intended to cover our supervisory controller personnel as well although they, of course, were not in the bargaining unit. The cost of coverage for those employees was not included in the \$40 million publicized in connection with that tentative agreement but was accounted for in our budgetary planning. We are proposing coverage, in the interest of equity, for other key players in the operation and maintenance of our air traffic control system, along with flight test

pilots. This treatment is warranted in recognition of the responsibilities they undertake in behalf of the flying public. Therefore, the legislation before you costs more than the \$40 million package with PATCO because it includes FAA operational and supervisory personnel outside the former bargaining unit of the controllers. To put these costs in perspective, originally a population of 17,500 would have received \$44 million in pay increases. Now, a population of 26,500 employees will receive pay increases totalling \$57.4 million.

In closing, I would urge the expeditious approval of this legislation by the Committee. It is important to recognize at this time not only the outstanding contributions made by many FAA employees in the aftermath of the illegal controllers' strike, but also that these same employees will continue to be called upon in the future to undertake substantial responsibilities on behalf of the people who depend upon our national air transportation system. The employees covered by this legislation have assisted us in providing a level of aviation safety unequalled anywhere else in the world. Let us recognize them for the valuable services they have already given us and the responsibilities they will shoulder in the future by enacting this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my prepared statement. I would like to turn now to Administrator Lynn Helms who will outline for you the major features of our legislative proposal.